

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A system and method for identifying a biological sample associated with a container is disclosed. A universally unique identifier is associated with each container. In one or more embodiments, the identifier comprises one or more markings having a specular reflectance which differs from the specular reflectance of the outer surface of the container adjacent the markings. A detection apparatus detects the differences in specularly reflected light to identify the identifier associated with the container. The identifier is associated with certain information regarding the container and biological sample. From that point forward, any information about the contents of the container may be retrieved by searching on its container ID. Because the container ID is assured by its manufacturer to be universally-unique, the container and sample may move from one organization to another under the same identifier, and information about the contents of the container may be shared by querying on its container ID. Practically, the sample ID becomes universal by virtue of presenting a universally-understood search key usable by anyone who needs to process the container. By suitably restricting access to sensitive database fields, patient confidentiality may more easily be assured since the marking on the specimen does not reveal any such information.